

ORATION:

DELIVERED BY REQUEST

OF

The Committee of Arrangements

OF

RICHMOND COUNTY, STATEN ISLAND, N. Y.,

AT

PORT RICHMOND,

BY

P. I. VAN PELT, D.D.,

On the 4th July, 1858,

AND PUBLISHED BY SAID COMMITTEE.

NEW-YORK:

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1858.

REV. P. I. VANPELT, D.D., RESIDENT OF THE CITY OF NEW-YORK :

RESPECTED AND DEAR SIR: The oration you delivered on the Fourth of July last, in compliance with our request, a Committee appointed at a meeting of the inhabitants of Richmond county, New-York, and in presence of the Historical Society of the same, and a large concourse of respectable people; and having given general and entire satisfaction, for which please to receive our united and cordial thanks; you, with some of us, having been absent during the months past, we do now further solicit from you, as soon as fitted for the press, a copy of your said excellent oration, for publication.

With regard and esteem,

your friends and fellow-citizens,
respectfully,

PORT RICHMOND, Staten Island,
Sept. 25th, 1858.

DR. EADEE,	} Committee.
CAPT. S. SQUIRES,	
DR. GALE,	
ABM. WOOD,	
JOHN F. H. KING,	
MR. USHER,	
DR. HARRISON,	

GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE, ETC.:

Having returned to the city, and received yours, I have the honor to say, I comply with your further request, and accordingly herewith transmit you a copy of my oration, delivered at Port Richmond, New-York, July 4th, 1858, in presence of your Historical Society and the immense concourse of respectable inhabitants, for publication.

Respectfully yours,

P. I. VANPELT.

NEW-YORK CITY, Sept. 26th, 1858.

ORATION

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS :

WITH adoring gratitude to God, from whom we hold our lives, and from whom all blessings flow, and with thanks to you, gentlemen of the Committee of Arrangements, for your kind, respectful request of me to address you on this occasion, we are now assembled on this bright and beautiful auspicious day, while we honor your respected Historical Society, and the thousands here assembled to celebrate the eighty-second anniversary of our American Independence.

A day big with the fate and fortune of the United States of America ; a day replete with interest and importance to our patriotic fathers, to Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the army, to the cause of liberty and free government, and to the rights of man throughout the world.

A rare spectacle was presented to the nations at this period of our history. A young people, small in numbers, and undisciplined in military science, without sufficient ammunition, arms, trained soldiers, and experienced generals and officers to lead them to victory ; a people though deficient and destitute in many things, yet possessed of personal strength and moral courage, and valuing their rights, rising in support of their rights, harmonious in council, firm and united in operation, to break the ties, to dissolve the connection, and throw off the yoke of oppression, of unjust taxation and persecution imposed on them by an old, warlike, and powerful Government—a kingly government which claimed to have the right to govern

and exercise undisputed dominion over the colonists, and force them to submit, under all circumstances, to their unjust and tyrannical exactions, and that, too, against loyal, respectful entreaty, expostulation, and remonstrance. Such a pending conflict could not but be interesting and important in the eyes of the world.

And further, as to the interest and importance involved in the American Revolution, and the consequences in case of failure, from England's and Britain's love of power and dominion, a Government prone to feel power and forget right, the hardships and privations, the reproach, dishonor, and cruel degradation, would no doubt have been greatly increased, with new trials of sore punishment, and infliction of painful, cruel deaths in the leaders of the bold and daring movement. And yet, notwithstanding the hazards and risks run, the perils and dangers to which they were exposed, such was the patriotism, the spirit and courage of the people North, South, East, and West; such their hatred of wrong and love of right, their abhorrence of oppression and love of justice and liberty, that they fearlessly determined to undertake and try the bold and noble achievement of Independence.

Accordingly, pondering well the problem which was solved by a resolve to resistance to the valor of their arms and vindication of their rights, they decided, in accord with the Declaration of Independence, to throw off the old and establish a new and better government. Appealing to a candid world for the justice of their cause, and to the God of heaven for his approval, his smiles and blessing, pledging to each other in solemn faith their "lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors." Hence it is manifest the American Revolution was not begun, nor was it the result of sudden ebullition of furious temper, the excitement and outburst of inflamed passion, nor of mad intemperance and unrestrained, wicked impulse, characterizing the excesses of a lawless, infuriated mob. But on the contrary, the action of Congress and the people was respectful, loyal, moderate, firm, dignified, determined, and wisely consistent. Their complaints and grievances being not redressed nor satisfied, the colonists were not so much displeased with the people of Great Britain—for among them were good friends to America, as Lord Chatham, Barré, and many others—as with the

arbitrary, unjust Government of England, which was under the lead of an unwise king and his vindictive ministers—North and Bute.

Our patriotic fathers seeing that a crisis was approaching, and that they must meet it, or be worse off, deprived of their just rights, be degraded and crushed in insignificance and poverty by exorbitant taxation without representation, be reduced to vassalage and serfdom, dishonored and miserable, rising superior to their fears and apprehensions, and animated with the cheering element of hope of success and a glorious triumph in the end. Though with small resources and slender preparation to grapple with a strong and warlike nation, they yet nobly resolved to make the effort and live free or perish. We are ready to admit they were a brave and remarkable people and race of men, not only for their willingness and ability to endure privations, make sacrifices, and suffer loss for their country's freedom, as for their courage, their sound common-sense to distinguish right from wrong, but also remarkable for their unanimity, fixedness of purpose, and love of a pure religion and free toleration of worship.

It may be considered a weakness in us thus to extol the virtues and so highly to estimate the character of our esteemed, venerated fathers, who began and laid the foundation of our Union and of the great model Republic of America.

Be it so. We feel free to honor the memories and virtuous character of a race of men who were the types of an illustrious manhood—who left us the fair inheritance of freedom and union, and an example worthy of imitation. While they sleep in death and rest in hope, we enjoy the fruits of their valor, their toil and labor. And on this anniversary forget them not. And while in earth their frames lay mouldering and decayed, their deathless names shall never pass away.

But fellow-citizens, there is yet another, higher, nobler sense in which to view the heroic conduct of our illustrious fathers and patriots of the Revolution, as developed. It is this: They were moved by the power of destiny, or purpose of God, and by the uncreated power of impulse that rules the destinies of men and nations. So the people of England got their Magna Charta from King John.

God has so formed the mind of man that, while a free moral

agent, left free to act, he acts out the designs and purposes of God, without at the time being sensible of it, for good or for evil. Bound to the throne of God, the conscience is left free, hence, the truth of the saying, That the fear (reverence) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, etc.

From the beginning, God, in his infinite goodness, has made ample provision for the comfort and happiness of men, both in this world and the world to come. Accordingly, in love unequalled, when we were all involved in the guilt and ruin of the Fall, he gave his Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life; and also the Holy Spirit sanctioning the same.

And for the peace and happiness of men in this world, he provided a just, mild, easy, rational, and good government, as at the first among his chosen people Israel; himself the head—the Maker of all.

But as men were prosperous, they became rich, arrogant, and rebellious, and rejected the counsel and government of God most high. For which ill conduct they were destroyed by a flood of waters, and only Noah, a just man, who walked with God, he, with his family, was preserved. From thence the families and generations of men started anew, from the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

But Ham proved to be depraved and wicked, disrespectful, mocking and dishonoring his pious father, against the moral law of God, and the law of nature and good order in society; and God, by sovereign power, doomed him in the line of his son Canaan, and his posterity, to servitude and subjection, and the degradation of slavery, to his brothers Shem and Japheth, in their posterity; thus punishing vice and wickedness, and rewarding virtue and righteousness, in his divine sovereignty; while Shem should be blessed and elevated in his race and descendants, and Japheth above and superior—above both and all in his race and descendants, to which fixed facts truthful history, ancient and modern, bears ample testimony.

And when, in process of time, these races multiplied and extended over the earth, we behold, according to the prophetic inspiration of Noah, the descendants of Ham, a wicked generation of idolaters; a Nimrod, a mighty hunter, first king at Babylon, his dominion reaching to the land of Shinar, and the

builders of the tower of Babel ; as also the Carthaginians, under Hannibal, in Africa, to which they fled, were overcome, and conquered by Scipio, the Roman. From Seth, in the line of his descendants, the Jews, the tribe of Judah and family of faithful Abraham, came the Saviour of the world in his humanity, on account of which he was blessed and called the God of Shem.

To them God had a favor, and, under his supreme rule, caused judges, appointed by the people, to be set over them, until, in the days of Samuel, their last and excellent magistrate, when, in the pride, the corruption, and arrogance of their wicked hearts, the people desired and demanded a king to be set over them ; which so displeased God, saying, they had rejected him, that he gave them a king in his anger, and afterwards took him, Saul, their first king, away in his wrath. So were the people in those days blinded to their own true interests and to the exercise of their just power.

Now, it was to restore and reestablish the rights and liberty of the people, that the revolution in our country was permitted to be undertaken by the Lord in heaven, with his favor and his blessing upon it. The brave Ethan Allen was, therefore, not far out of the way when he told his adversary he acted by authority of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress. The principle adopted by freemen was, and is, resistance to tyrants is obedience to God.

That omniscient eye, which scans the thoughts and works of men, which rolls rapturous o'er the scenes of creation, had made and held this country in reserve more than sixteen hundred years—then a waste, howling wilderness—for a future, higher destiny ; an asylum for the poor, the burdened, and oppressed of all nations ; where freedom should be vouchsafed, the pure religion of revealed, inspired truth, as contained in the Bible, should be professed and maintained, without legal exactions, State preferences or requirements, and without molestation and hindrance by the secular power ; and a civil government emanating from, and vested in, the sovereign people ; and where the form and manner of religious worship should be free from any hierarchy, and uncontrolled by any civil, political, and ecclesiastical enactment.

We find, accordingly, three emigrations of civilized and

Christian people coming across the wide Atlantic. The first, about 1607, from England, and landed in Jamestown, Va. The second from Holland, and Huguenots or Protestants from France, about 1614, and landed in New-York. These, after possessing and improving the city and country fifty years, the king of England, by sudden war and superior force, took from them, and set up the English Government. The third from England, non-conformists to Episcopacy, but last from Holland in 1620, to which they fled, and landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts.

These emigrants, descendants of Japheth, though differing in minor things, harmonized in the essentials of religion, and love of liberty and law.

There is a pleasure in contemplating the character of men who, as agents and instruments, were to act in concert to check tyranny and corruption in the state and civil government, as it had been in the Church and State of religion by Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, the Prince of Orange, and their associates, in the period known as the Reformation in Europe. And as then, so now. Unexpectedly, men of talent, young men, came forward—Lafayette, Hamilton, Burr, Steuben, Pulaski, Kosciuszko—and joined in resisting oppression, and defending the rights and freedom of the people of the Colonies.

And as time rolled on, the political sky became more dark and portentous. Men silent and intent, as on the eve of an explosion; the council of the people in their Continental Congress, determined at all hazards to resist and defend themselves in their rights, and enjoyment of freedom to them and their children! It was indeed an eventful time, not only full of concern to the living, but to unborn millions.

The trial was to be made whether the King and his corrupt Privy Ministers North and Bute should rule with unbridled sway and be master, or the people with their just rights. In this great cause and conflict, the King, with his armament and land forces at home and hired mercenary troops on one side, with the sinews of money and weapons of war. On the other side, a young, energetic, brave people, with just and honorable motives, appealing to God for the rectitude of their intentions, and submitting their cause to a jury of the world, with a group

of their great and good men, as Washington, a true friend, in whose wisdom, integrity, and capacity they had confidence.

At the head and in centre of which august group of American patriots and heroes* was Washington, whom I beheld of tall, majestic form, the ideal of a General, surrounded by a constellation of liberty's ardent, pure, and true sons, such as Hancock, Adams, Otis, Quincy, Franklin, Livingston, with the military chieftains, Putnam, Greene, Lafayette, Morgan, Wayne, and others, as Patrick Henry, Virginia's distinguished orator, who followed the noble sentiment uttered by Adams, Independence and liberty, now and forever. That the day would be observed and celebrated as a national festivity, with orations, sermons, bonfires, and various manifestations of joy and rejoicings. As we find it is. Jefferson, learnt from him to be a patriot. And Massachusetts beheld the first blood shed in the cause.

These were the times trying and calamitous, full of disaster and dismay, family concerns neglected, farms dilapidated. Gen. Putnam left his plow in the furrow; shops and stores were shut up, the school-house deserted, women, wives, and children left at home, the church, temple of the living God, closed, and converted and used either as a hospital or place of amusement, or demolished, because pronounced and condemned as rebel churches. Such was the fate of the Dutch church that stood near this, as also one in the village of Richmond. Notwithstanding these privations and losses, the patriots were firm and true. They had been accustomed to defeats and disasters, as were the Huguenots persecuted in France for their religion, stripped of their property, massacred, and chased out of France by a bigot King and Church, and escaping to the republic of Holland, for protection and safety. Amidst this intolerant administration of kingly power, the bigoted exclusiveness and fanaticism of religion, the tyranny of the State in union with the Church, strengthening each other. It seemed the time had come, in the providence of God, to break the unholy alliance.

* On the occasion of Washington's death, which occurred Dec. 14, 1799, Congress having appointed his birthday, 22d Feb. 1800, to observe and celebrate his funeral, I delivered an oration in the Church at Flatbush, King's county, Long Island, by request of a committee of five gentlemen appointed by the inhabitants.

to resist the overgrown, tyrannical, corrupt dominion of Church and State, and separate the unscriptural and unjust, the meddlesome and unnatural twin pair, and that it was the task of young Americans to do it.

Accordingly, when the myrmidons of foreign power, hired and owned by England, reached our shores in hostile array, an army of patriots, led by Washington and his generals, appointed by Congress, fearless of danger, with brave hearts, though undisciplined and limited in military science, yet in the face of danger and death, they pressed around the elevated standards, and unfurled the banners of their country.

And although often overpowered by numbers, and superior military discipline, they battled and retreated by the direction, the moderation, and with the care and caution of the prudent Washington. Often without arms and ammunition, and in the destitution of the country, infested by the enemies of the cause of independence and liberty, they without money, food, clothing, and shelter from the bleak wind and raging storm, yet buoyed up with hopes of success, and animated with the inspiring element of a final glorious triumph! though often hope deferred made the heart sick; and in hope believing against hope: along in equal balance hung the unequal contest. Yet the fact of the uncommon result of the seven years' conflict, namely, two hostile armies conquered and taken prisoners of war, with arms surrendered, cheered the hearts of the patriots and champions of freedom.* The soldiers said, "God is on our side," and so said many a noble Briton.

The ways of God and dealings with his Church and people are wonderful. He moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform. Forty years were his ancient people in the wilderness, from the bondage of Egypt to the promised land; not because the distance was so great as to require that time, but

* A remarkable fact is herewith noticed. The Tune called Yankee Doodle, which had been composed in sport and derision, and made to ridicule the American troops and colonies, was the *Tune* which the Americans afterwards used at the capture of Gen. Burgoyne and his army at Saratoga, as also of Cornwallis at Yorktown; and the Hessians, at Trenton; and also at New-Orleans' great battle and wondrous victory by Gen. Jackson over Gen. Pakenham and his invading army. The tune which, whether at sea or land, suited to a T. So we kept the tune, but not the Tea, as is well known to Yankees.

they were led by a cloud, and a pillar of fire, round about, through a sea, on dry land, the waters heaped up, and standing like walls on either side of them. Their enemies pursuing them with revenge, were all drowned in the same sea.

Then did Moses and Joshua publish the name of the Lord, and called on the people to ascribe greatness to God; and they sung a song of praise to God, of joy and gladness, for their great deliverance. They had to contend, in pursuit of the desired and promised blessings, in the great wilderness, not only with fiery serpents, and venomous scorpions, not only with them, but also with the Amalekites, the posterity of Ham, a proud, idolatrous, wicked people, their ever-enduring enemies, whom the Lord told Moses and the people to smite, to kill and destroy them, that there were none left; which they accordingly did. A significant type, that there is a God that judgeth and taketh vengeance of his and his people's enemies in the earth.

So had our patriot fathers, in pursuit of independence and liberty, various, numerous, valiant, and powerful enemies at home and abroad, to contend against, that the blessing of liberty might, like the casket of precious jewels, like the calm sea after a storm, and fruits of the mariner after the storm of terror at sea, and toils of the husbandman; at last; after much patient waiting and fears and efforts: so came the triumph of American Independence and liberty, shouted in the streets, from the press, from house-tops, from Congress, the school, and the congregation of devout worshippers of Almighty God, saying: "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men, men of might, rose up against us, they would have subdued us quick, when their fierce wrath was kindled against us." But we are delivered, and free. What a triumph! Songs of praises ascended to God.*

We, fellow-citizens, are met to celebrate this great event,

* Glory to the King of kings: bring the heart
 Before his throne, bend low to him the knee;
 Worship him, and him alone;
 He's the only King we own,
 And he has made us free!
 And he must and will reign till all enemies
 Are subdued, and made his footstool.

not in anger, nor malevolent feeling to the British people and government, but to cherish the love of freedom, suited to, and keep alive the spirit of the day and the joyful occasion, in which God was so propitious and good to our new and broad land—to the immortal Washington, and the illustrious army, battling for freedom—in which his divine interposition was manifest in supplying us with money, clothing, arms, ammunitions for defense, with generals, and allied men in league and concord, faithful and true. We say then, praise to God, to a suffering, gallant, fearless army, honor to their memories, *the day, and all who honor it.*

Independence being acknowledged and established, a new government was to be organized, which required statesmen, and statesman-like abilities. Fortunately for the country and the cause of freedom, we had, and there were such men of integrity, virtue, and talent, with honest George Washington at the head, to keep those inclined to hereditary government and aristocracy, as Hamilton and others, in check, who met to organize a federal, or general Constitution, in order to form a more perfect union between the States, and secure the blessings of liberty to all the people, which being adopted by the States, and under which we have lived, and do live, prosperous and happy, in peace and plenty, the envy of the world, notwithstanding former nullification, and the more recent agitation of abolitionists, and squabbles or contentions for superiority in office, for power, most of all, perhaps, for renown, and money from the public treasury, without industry, patriotism, capacity, and good management to earn money enough, and so easily to deck them out in splendor, with brilliant ornaments.

And compelled in 1812, by disaffection at home, by opposition, intolerant insult and injury from abroad, assuming and claiming the right, against maritime and international law, in peace to interrupt our commerce, search our merchant vessels, and take our seamen, compelled to go again to war with Old England, who claimed to be the mistress of the seas, to maintain our national honor with our just rights, the protection and dignity of our flag, and for free trade and sailor's rights, which said war is called the *second war of Independence*. In this, as in the first, God was evidently with us. For, while it was

thought and feared our small navy would be swept from the ocean by an immensely superior naval force, flushed with victory, pride, and power, yet our naval commanders, the enlightened sons of patriot sires, taught and animated by the illustrious examples of our own commanders, also the naval heroes, Van Tromp, De Ruyter, and Nelson, as were our army heroes by Frederick of Prussia, Bruce and Wallace of Scotland, and of Washington and his compeers of our own country, fearlessly met the giant foe with energy, skill, precision, and tact, they behaved valiantly, and did wonders at sea, as on land. And when, in the progress of the war, it was ascertained from a letter, sent by the commander of the hostile fleet off Sandy Hook to his female relative in Broadway, New-York, that he hoped to have the pleasure to dine with her soon, one of these days, and on his receiving an anonymous nameless letter from the fort on Staten Island, the entrance of the Narrows, suggested and written by the chaplain, that they would be prepared, and happy to give him a breakfast of red-hot balls, served up quicker than cakes, as he passed along to dine with his dear friend and relative. To which the royal commander replied, as was said at the time: "Egad! it will not do for us to attempt to penetrate the harbor of New-York. They are too well prepared for us. We will go down South." Which was done, and the city of New-York escaped. But the cities of Washington and Baltimore suffered both loss and injury. At Bladensburg the enemy's ranks were thinned by the well-directed fire of Commodore Barney, and at Baltimore, the enemy lost their daring General Ross.

To the North, under Generals Brown and Scott, at Chippewa, of which battle this day is the 44th anniversary, so at Plattsburgh by Macomb, and by the gallant Perry and McDonough on the lakes. And last, and not least, at the culmination of the war, the ever-memorable battle at New-Orleans, by General Jackson, the honest and fearless champion of freedom and rights of the people.

Thus ended the second war with the same powerful, warlike Government, speaking the same English language, in order to maintain our just rights, our liberty, our honorable and equal rank among the powers of the earth. We hope to have no more war, but lasting peace with England, nor with any nation.

Of that we are confident at present. But if we must we dare. And trusting in God, with our more than thirty millions, we shall succeed. And now, by the united coöperation of the genius, skill, and persevering efforts of the sons of our country, America and England, with Ireland and Europe, binding us more closely together in ties of concord, by the Submarine Atlantic Electric Cable—an achievement of wondrous scientific skill, and an event foreshadowing the dawn of millennial peace and glory, when nations shall learn war no more, but dwell together in one vast brotherhood, emulous for the glory of God and good to each other; when the Word of the Lord shall have free course, and permeating through the nations shall be glorified; when pure religion, with civil and religious liberty, shall pervade the habitable globe; the nations and kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his beloved Christ.

Impelled by a sense of duty, we have had war with Mexico, in which our brave volunteer citizen soldiers, under General Taylor, his generals and officers, vanquished the foe at the chapparal, and afterwards at the sanguinary action of Buena Vista. And so also, under General Scott, at the seaport of Vera Cruz, defended by the stone fort of San Juan, and near where Cortez landed in 1518, at Cerrro Gordo, Chepultepec, and at Mexico, the capital, and Palace of the Montezumas, where General Scott and his brave soldiers went. In all these and other places, the prowess, activity, and skill of the generals and soldiers of freedom shone conspicuous. Verily, it is no small nor trifling matter to incur the displeasure and provoke the free Americans to war. As Aaron Burr said, he was provoked to meet Hamilton in single combat. And as the Mexicans under Santa Anna did, los Yankos, calling all Gen. Scott's troops Yankees, and sometimes live Yankees. They are brave and desperate in battle, but generous and just and kind to conquered enemies. Let us, therefore, be careful not to provoke each other, nor any other people to wrath, but rather to good works, for this is honorable and pleasing to God; and with a view to maintain our Independence and liberty, and transmit the fair inheritance of freedom to future generations, with our great privileges, let us discountenance and avoid all interference and agitation of subjects tending to di-

vide and alienate one part of our united country from the other—South from North, and East from West. Such was Washington's advice. But let us do the things that make for peace, unity, and love, as reason and the Scriptures of God demand, and then behold how pleasant and good for brethren to dwell together in unity.

In conclusion, let us ever bear in mind that our freedom and union, which God in love and mercy designed and has given us, with trust in him our Almighty Father and divine Saviour. Not all the factions of men, by the impulse of passion or interest combined, shall be able to conquer and sever us. Then we'll say, with the American lyrist :

"The union of hearts and the union of States,
With the union of hands locked together;
The star-spangled banner that floats on the breeze,
The flag of our union forever."

Parting with General Lafayette on his visit to our country as the nation's guest, when I had the honor to address and welcome him, he said, with which words I conclude: "If we should not meet again in this world, I hope, my dear friend, we shall meet in heaven with Washington and the virtuous, true, and gallant officers and soldiers of the first and second war of American Independence." And I would add, all the sincere people of God.

Note

The original of this pamphlet was
presented to the Staten Island
Historical Society in 1929 by
Miss Eliza Lake, 200 Willow Brook
Road, Staten Island, N. Y.

See page 13 - Wm T. Davis.



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